



U.S. Immigration
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News Release

NINE ARRESTED IN FRAUDULENT IDENTIFICATION DOCUMENT SWEEP

Newly Formed ICE Document and Benefit Fraud Task Force Targets Counterfeit Document Labs

BOSTON-- Nine people were arrested last week and charged federally with selling fraudulent United States identification documents such as Social Security cards, green cards and alien registration cards. The arrests were the result of a week-long effort by the newly created Immigration and Customs Enforcement Document and Benefit Fraud Task Force - one of only ten such task forces in the nation. Last week's enforcement actions took place in Framingham, Hull, Lawrence, Malden, Medford and Worcester.

United States Attorney Michael J. Sullivan and Matthew J. Etre, Acting Special Agent in Charge of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in Boston, announced the last week's Task Force operation which targeted several counterfeit document labs in Massachusetts. As a result, nine individuals were arrested and four search warrants executed resulting in the seizure of a wide array of document making materials and equipment.

"Immigration laws exist to protect American citizens," stated U.S. Attorney Sullivan. "It is understandable that many from around the globe would want to come to live, work and raise families here in the greatest democracy in the world. However, this must be done in compliance with United States immigration laws - not in violation of them. The U.S. Attorney's Office is committed to working with the ICE Document and Benefit Fraud Task Force to disrupt the operation of fraudulent document labs in Massachusetts. Today's arrests should make clear that those individuals who violate our laws and assist others in circumventing the immigration process will be prosecuted."

The nine defendants, all in the United States illegally, were arrested on criminal complaints charging them with violations involving the transfer or sale of fraudulent identification documents, including fraudulent Social Security cards, "green" cards, and alien registration cards. In each of the cases, cooperating informants, under the supervision of Task Force agents, made purchases of counterfeit documents from the defendants. Prices for a "set" (e.g. a counterfeit Social Security card and green card) typically ranged from \$120 to \$200.

"Counterfeit document labs pose a very serious threat to the safety and security of our communities and our country," said Matthew J. Etre, Acting Special Agent in Charge of ICE's Office of

Investigations in Boston. “Fake documents create the illusion of legitimacy and allow criminals and law breakers to hide in plain sight. ICE and our partners on the Document and Benefit Fraud Task Force remain committed to disrupting and dismantling these criminal networks.”

In April, ICE Headquarters in Washington, D.C. announced the creation of joint task forces in 10 Cities, including Boston, to combat document and benefit fraud. Led by ICE, the task forces build on existing partnerships to bring investigators together from a variety of agencies with expertise in different aspects of document and benefit fraud. Members of the ICE Document and Benefit Fraud Task Force in Boston include: the U.S. Secret Service, the Department of State’s Diplomatic Security Service, the Social Security Administration’s, Office of Inspector General, and the Middlesex County Sheriff’s Department. Members of the Task Force will partner with the U.S. Attorney’s Office to formulate a comprehensive approach in targeting criminal organizations behind these schemes as well as the ineligible beneficiaries of such fraud.

Those arrested last week were:

1. **RUBENS DESOUSA PEREIRA**, age 36, of 66 Devir Street, Malden, MA. **PEREIRA** was arrested on June 6, 2006. Following a hearing held on June 12, 2006, the Court found probable cause for the arrest of **PEREIRA** and he was ordered detained pending trial.
2. **LUCIANO SILVIO SANTOS**, age 44, 98 Magoun Avenue, Medford, MA. **SANTOS** was arrested on June 6, 2006 and is in custody pending a probable cause and detention hearing set for June 16, 2006.
3. **ÉCLAIR C. TEIXERIA**, age 41, 181 Hollis Street, Apt. #1, Framingham, MA. **TEIXERIA** was arrested on June 8, 2006 and is in custody pending a probable cause and detention hearing set for June 16, 2006.
4. **JUAN SILVINO ESTEBAN RAMIREZ**, age 36, of 87 Alder Street, Apt. #1, Lawrence. **RAMIREZ**, brother of **CHAVEZ**, was arrested on June 5, 2006. At a hearing held on June 12, 2006, probable cause for the arrest of **RAMIREZ** was found and he was ordered detained pending trial.
5. **ISMAEL ESTEBAN CHAVEZ**, age 25, of 87 Alder Street, Apt. #1, Lawrence. **CHAVEZ**, brother of **RAMIREZ**, was arrested on June 5, 2006. At a hearing held on June 12, 2006, probable cause for the arrest of **CHAVEZ** was found and he was ordered detained pending trial.
6. **MARIA COSTA**, age 33, of 84 Mountford Road, Apt #3, Hull, MA. **COSTA** was arrested on June 7, 2006, and is in custody pending a probable cause and detention hearing set for June 14, 2006.
7. **RICARDO MEIRELES ALVES**, age 50, of 18 Benedict Street, Apt #3, Somerville, MA. **ALVES**, husband of **SOUSA**, was arrested on June 6, and is in custody pending a probable cause and detention hearing set for June 15, 2006.
8. **CLEONICE SOUSA**, age 42, of 18 Benedict Street, Apt #3, Somerville, MA. **SOUSA**, wife of **ALVES**, was arrested on June 6, 2006, and is in custody pending a probable cause and detention hearing set for June 15, 2006.

9. **MATUSALEM SOARES DA ROCHA**, age 20, of 19 Kelley Square, Worcester, MA, was arrested on June 5, 2006. At a hearing held on June 9, 2006, the Court found probable cause for **DA ROCHA's** arrest. **DA ROCHA** remains in custody pending a final decision on pre-trial detention by the Court.

If convicted of the charges, each of the defendants face a maximum penalty of 15 years in prison, to be followed by 3 years of supervised release, and a fine of up to \$250,000. Additionally, upon completion of any prison sentence imposed, each defendant faces deportation to his/her country of origin.

The cases are being investigated by the ICE Document and Benefit Fraud Task Force whose members include: Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the U.S. Secret Service, the Department of State's Diplomatic Security Service, the Social Security Administration's, Office of Inspector General, and the Middlesex County Sheriff's Department. The cases are being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys in Sullivan's Major Crimes Unit.

The details contained in the complaints are allegations. The defendants are presumed to be innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.